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MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Margaret Rotundo
Representative Drew Gattine
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Senator Anne Carney
Representative Amy Kuhn
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Amy Quinlan, State Court Administrator

Date: February 11, 2025

Re: Testimony of the Maine Judicial Branch on the FY2026-2027 Biennial Budget Request

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Amy Quinlan; I am the State Court Administrator for the Maine Judicial Branch. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to discuss the Judicial Branch's FY26 and FY27 Biennium Budget requests. From the beginning of her term, Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill has emphasized the importance of ensuring that the Judiciary, as the third branch of government, has adequate resources to fulfill our mission of providing fair and timely access to justice to all Maine citizens. Our success depends on sufficient staffing to do the work, safe and accessible courthouses for the public and the people who work within them, and a reliable and secure technology infrastructure. The Maine Judicial Branch's biennium submission repeats our request to prioritize these critical needs as follows:

- **Long-term general fund support for the maintenance and licensing costs for the new electronic filing and case management system.** The dramatic reduction in revenues dedicated to supporting the Judicial Branch's new modern case management system as outlined in 4 MRS §17-A shows no signs of rebounding. The plan to fully support these costs through fines and fees has never come to fruition, and one-time funding is not sufficient. Successful completion of the project is not possible without a long-term commitment of general funds.
- **Increased resources to support operations at our courthouses, including more clerks, marshals, and technology support.** We appreciate the additional resources received to date. But the need for more staffing was affirmed by an independent

study done by the National Center for State Courts and makes plain that we do not have enough personnel to efficiently handle the workload. We also continue to seek increased funding to support contractual resources necessary to fill the void until the Judicial Branch is adequately staffed.

- **Volume increases to support the growing demand for guardian ad litem (GAL), interpreter, and mental health examiner services.** This request was awarded as a one-time Supplemental Budget FY24 initiative; however, the need continues to grow, particularly in the area of GALs. Increased ongoing funding to support access to justice in these critical matters is necessary. That is why we repeat the request for increased funding in the biennium and added an emergency request to fund a spike in demand for GAL services. Failure to adequately fund these resources will result in case delays.

The Judicial Branch's biennium submission is heavily focused in two areas:

1. **Funding to upgrade and maintain the technology infrastructure; and**
2. **Ensuring that our courthouses are safe and accessible to the public.**

Courts have turned to technology with unprecedented speed over the last several years as an efficient way to manage increasingly complex caseloads. For example, technology solutions are used to create a record, which is required to allow for review and appeal of court proceedings; provide remote access to litigants, witnesses, attorneys, and the public; enable video remote interpreting to those with limited English proficiency; support the scheduling and payment of mediators across the state; and numerous other essential functions. Technology has helped the courts to avoid unnecessary costs and delay when people cannot be physically present, and it provides assistance to litigants who might not otherwise have access to the help they need.

These systems require frequent updating and replacement to ensure that they are working properly and are secure. To date, these efforts have been hampered by a lack of funding to timely address needed updates and malfunctions after initial implementation. Outdated and malfunctioning technology systems are delaying proceedings, sometimes by many weeks, even months. Failure to timely update systems can leave them vulnerable to attack. The Maine Judicial Branch seeks funding to address these issues by creating a schedule to replace technology at the end of life, funding for contracts with vendors to ensure immediate service, hiring additional personnel to address technology issues in each region across the state, and funding to enhance the Judicial Branch's ability to prevent and manage cybersecurity threats.

Just as important to an efficient and effective court system is ensuring the safety of those working at and visiting our courthouse facilities. We have been clear about our need for additional marshals to staff entry screening at the courthouses so that they may remain open to the public. We appreciate the additional resources we've received, but more are needed. Moreover, recruitment and retention of qualified personnel continues to be challenging, as is the case nationwide. To make these positions more competitive, we seek a market adjustment to the pay grades of deputy judicial marshal, corporal, and sergeant positions. Additional requests seek to replace safety equipment and address security recommendations that were received through a recent security assessment.

Before I turn to our specific biennium requests, I would like to address our emergency requests that were not included in the supplemental budget. As a result, we were left with a shortfall totaling \$913,579. It is my understanding that these needs would be considered in the biennial budget. I have included our justifications and our testimony on these items below. Each of these items remain a priority for the Judicial Branch. We ask that you include them in the FY26 biennial budget. They are as follows:

C-A-7100: General Fund (REF #191 in Supplemental Budget) All Other \$350,000
GAL Volume Increases. This request provides funding for a volume increase in guardian ad litem services. These are the attorneys appointed to serve as advocates for the children in child protection cases pursuant to 22 MRSA § 4005. Increases are trending higher than anticipated in this area. This initiative supplements the request for a volume increase in the biennium for GALs, medical examiners, and interpreters. Costs for GALs are increasing much faster than anticipated due, in part, to the increase in the number and complexity of pending child protection cases.

C-A-79: General Fund (REF #192 in Supplemental Budget) All Other \$90,000
Increased Lease Costs. This request seeks funding for increased lease costs for multiple courthouse locations across the state (Bridgton, Caribou, Fort Kent, Rockland, and Portland) and for the Portland Administrative Office of the Courts. There is an immediate need for funding for this fiscal year. This request is in addition to increased costs sought through the biennial budget for FY26 and FY27.

C-A-80: General Fund (REF #193 in Supplemental Budget) All Other \$147,079
Funding for Security Equipment. The Judicial Branch is in the process of enhancing its safety readiness planning. This request seeks funding to replenish supplies and replace aging equipment, firearm supplies, trauma kits, and body armor. The supplies help protect the public, employees, and judicial marshals from violent incidents. There is an immediate need for funding combined with the request in the biennial budget. This request stages the cost over time rather than one lump sum.

C-A-84: General Fund (REF #194 in Supplemental Budget) All Other \$126,500
Improvements to Leased Facilities. This is a one-time request for improvements to locations where MJB is leasing courthouse facilities. Improvements are often done on a cost-sharing basis with the landlord and are necessary to keep courthouses functional, safe, and ADA compliant. Funds in this initiative are for an elevator overhaul and HVAC installation in the Machias courthouse; tree work, carpet updates, and LED lighting in Knox County Courthouse; and HVAC installation for a server room in Androscoggin County.

C-A-85: General Fund (REF #195 in Supplemental Budget) All Other \$100,000
One-time Funding for Gmail Licensing. This is a one-time request for Gmail licensing. Since 2016, the MJB has utilized two different software platforms—Google Workspace and Microsoft Office 365. However, supporting both platforms has become inefficient and costly. The Judicial Branch is in the process of moving from Google to Microsoft 365 (the platform in which most of the enterprise and government world resides). This change was important to reduce the costs and resources needed to support both systems. We expect this migration to be completed by the end of FY26.

C-A-87: General Fund (REF #196 in Supplemental Budget) All Other \$100,000
One-time Funding for Contractual Assistance to Support Office 365 Transition from Google Sites to SharePoint. The Judicial Branch is transitioning away from Google Workspace and migrating to the Microsoft Office 365 environment. Although emails were successfully transitioned in 2023, the Judicial Branch needs to hire outside contractors to complete a successful Office 365 transition from Google Sites to SharePoint, Google Files to OneDrive, Google Groups to MS Groups, and Google Calendars to MS Calendars. This is a one-time expenditure to complete the transition so that the Judicial Branch will no longer require Google licenses.

I will now address the Judicial Branch's FY2026-2027 biennial requests:

C-A-81: General Fund (A-457 1st initiative)

FY26: \$11,075

FY27: \$11,075

The importance of collecting and maintaining key court data continues to increase as the MJB relies more heavily on data for case management, strategic planning, budgeting, and improving court performance. Public and justice partners increasingly depend on ready access to data, and accurate and timely data are essential for public trust and confidence in the judiciary. The complexity of the requests for those tasked with providing this information has increased dramatically since the pandemic and continues to grow with the availability of more data through the implementation of the Tyler case management and e-Filing system. This is a reclassification of a Processor Auditor (pay grade 17) to a Data and Process Analyst (pay grade 18). This is a highly-specialized position responsible for complex technical and analytical work involving designing and executing research projects and studies; querying, collecting, and analyzing data; facilitating data management and production; and producing and disseminating reports, visualizations, and other information to support the MJB in its goals of timely, efficient, and consistent court operations.

C-A-82: General Fund (A-457 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$10,079

FY27: \$10,082

For the same reasons noted in C-A-81, a reclassification is requested from a Court Management Analyst position (pay grade 16) to a Senior Court Management Analyst position (pay grade 17). This position works to implement data projects; research data management resources; perform ongoing data analyses of court data related to evaluate outcomes, as well as analyses related to overall organizational performance; and responds to inquiries for court data, public information, and proposed legislation.

C-A-4: Collections Fund (A-457 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$124,772

FY27: \$130,902

This initiative continues and makes permanent a limited period Staff Accountant position previously established by Financial Order JJ2306F3. This position is responsible for recording and reconciling collected revenues; assisting with revenue collection reconciliations, including developing new processes and procedures in line with the new case management system; fiscal bail reconciliations, including spot auditing of overpayment processes to ensure appropriate

application of collected revenue; assisting the Revenue Manager in internal control review and process improvement; and overseeing and assisting with the day-to-day work of the Accounting Technician position, including cash reconciliations, approval of revenue related transactions, processing accounting journals, and creating receivables.

C-A-44: General Fund (A-458 1st initiative)

FY26: \$615,725

FY27: \$653,657

As more courts and case types come online with Enterprise Justice (the court's new electronic filing and case management system), the need for electronic filing specialists increases. This initiative requests funding for five Electronic Filing Specialists and one Electronic Filing Supervisor. These positions provide centralized review of electronic filings coming into the courts and also provide support for e-filers, relieving the local clerks' offices from reviewing electronic filings and ensuring that the formatting and standards for electronic filings is consistent throughout the court system.

C-A-46: General Fund (A-458 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$150,000

FY27: \$150,000

This request seeks funding for overdue maintenance work of aging major equipment at several locations, including generators at West Bath District Court, replacement of the lighting controls and equipment at the Penobscot Judicial Center, and a roof repair at the Capital Judicial Center. Regular maintenance could extend the useful service life and avoid additional costs from the damage associated with catastrophic equipment failures. The inability to address these failures has led to court cancelations. Existing operational funds are not sufficient to cover these anticipated needs on an ongoing basis.

C-A-47: General Fund (A-458 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$510,374

FY27: \$521,154

This initiative seeks a market reallocation of the Deputy Marshal positions from pay grade 11 to 12. These positions are critical to the functioning of the MJB. Courtrooms have had to close when positions have gone unfilled across the state. Recruitment and retention have become difficult given the pay disparity in comparison with other law enforcement jobs.

C-A-48: General Fund (A-458 4th initiative)

FY26: \$41,306

FY27: \$41,487

This initiative seeks a market reallocation of the Corporal positions from pay grade 12 to 13 for the same reasons noted in C-A-47.

C-A-49: General Fund (A-458 5th initiative)

FY26: \$65,989

FY27: \$65,833

This initiative seeks a market reallocation of the Sergeant positions from pay grade 14 to 15 for the same reasons noted in C-A-47.

C-A-50: General Fund (A-458 6th initiative)

FY26: \$250,000

FY27: \$250,000

A security assessment of the needs of the MJB was conducted in June 2022 by the National Center for State Courts. The report recommended numerous improvements to be implemented at the MJB facilities statewide. This request seeks funding on an ongoing basis to enact a phased plan for many of these recommendations over the next several years.

C-A-51: General Fund (A-458 7th initiative)

FY26: \$50,000

FY27: \$50,000

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that people with disabilities be afforded equal access to government buildings and services. All courthouses must comply with the requirements of the ADA, for members of the public (Title II) and for employees (Title I). Courthouses and courtrooms must be free of barriers. Court patrons who are mobility impaired; physically weak; or have sight, hearing, manipulation, or other disabilities must be able to navigate freely from the outside, through the courthouse entrance, and to each public space within the building. In locations where any barrier exists, the ADA requires a Transition Plan, providing a schedule for modifications. Establishing and prioritizing perennial funds for barrier removal is a critical part of the Transition Plan.

C-A-52: General Fund (A-459 1st initiative)

FY26: \$250,000

FY27: \$125,000

MEJIS will need to be maintained until Enterprise Justice is fully implemented in the trial courts and all cases can be transferred over. The goal is to have Enterprise Justice fully implemented by early 2027.

C-A-53: General Fund (A-459 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$20,000

FY27: \$20,000

This initiative covers the increased cost of parking for employees at locations around the state.

C-A-54: General Fund (A-459 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$30,000

FY27: \$30,000

This initiative covers the increased cost of paper file storage at locations around the state.

C-A-55: General Fund (A-459 4th initiative)

FY26: \$40,000

FY27: \$40,000

Justices of the Peace provide a critical service by reviewing search and arrest warrants and involuntary commitments, freeing judicial officers to attend to court matters. Their fees have not increased since 1987. This initiative provides funding for an increase from \$35 to \$40 for a search warrant (which can run 20-30+ pages) and \$25 to \$35 for arrest warrants, PC affidavits, and involuntary committals (which are much shorter in nature).

C-A-56: General Fund (A-459 5th initiative)

FY26: \$43,780

FY27: \$37,780

Additional funding is needed to meet higher training costs for judges in all specialty court dockets and training for all judges on new court procedures and changes in the law.

C-A-58: General Fund (A-459 6th initiative)

FY26: \$308,892

FY27: \$324,033

This request is for three additional Courtroom Technology Assistants (CTAs), which are responsible for the digital recording of courtroom trials and hearings and maintenance and troubleshooting of the FTR equipment.

C-A-59: General Fund (A-459 7th initiative)

FY26: \$514,280

FY27: \$539,795

This request is for five additional Deputy Marshal positions. Lack of sufficient staffing has led to periodic courthouse and courtroom closures. These additional positions will help leave courthouses open to the public.

C-A-60: General Fund (A-460 1st initiative)

FY26: \$212,326

FY27: \$223,046

This request is for two additional Corporal positions for the same reasons noted in C-A-59.

C-A-62: General Fund (A-460 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$100,000

FY27: \$100,000

The electronic filing and case management system rollout will require facilities changes throughout the state, so a one-time funding request is needed to modify workspaces related to the system implementation. Potential changes for space, WAN connectivity, and power may be required to accommodate Enterprise Justice desktops, scanners, card readers, dual monitors, Public Access Computers, etc.

C-A-65: General Fund (A-460 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$100,000

This is a one-time request for ongoing Google licensing. The MJB is moving from Google to Microsoft 365 and expects the migration to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2025-26. Once done, the MJB will no longer need Google licensing.

C-A-84: General Fund (A-460 4th initiative)

FY26: \$78,991

FY27: \$78,991

This initiative provides additional funding for the increase in costs for temporary services utilized when there is a staffing shortage of clerks and marshals.

C-A-86: General Fund (A-460 5th initiative)

FY26: \$210,893

FY27: \$210,893

With the end of the pandemic, the MJB has resumed jury trials and called in more jury pools to address the backlog. This initiative provides funding for the cost of increasing the number of jurors called to jury duty to address the cases awaiting trial.

C-A-87: General Fund (A-460 6th initiative)

FY26: \$62,598

FY27: \$62,598

The number of documents (warrants, involuntary commitments, PC affidavits) signed by Justices of the Peace has increased. This initiative provides funding to cover the volume increase in documents.

C-A-89: General Fund (A-460 7th initiative)

FY26: \$490,000

FY27: \$490,000

This request was received as one-time funding in Public Law 2023, chapter 643; however, funding is needed on an ongoing basis to cover the volume increase in guardian ad litem, interpreter, and mental health examiner services. There is a growing demand for court services, and, as the Judicial Branch works to alleviate the backlog of cases, it is anticipated that there will be a correlating increase in service costs.

C-A-5: General Fund (A-461 1st initiative)

FY26: \$11,173

FY27: \$11,173

Funding is requested for increased insurance rates in accordance with the rates published by Risk Management.

C-A-6: General Fund (A-461 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$271,404

FY27: \$290,343

This initiative establishes three new Service Center/Violations Bureau Assistant Clerk positions. Currently, the Service Center answers all calls directed at courts in regions 1, 3, 7, and 8; the Portland District and Cumberland County Superior Courts; and the Portland AOC, resolving approximately 80% of calls without needing to redirect to the local court. These additional positions would allow the Service Center to make significant progress in its larger effort to take on the remaining calls in regions 4, 5, 6, and Bridgton in region 2.

C-A-9: General Fund (A-461 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$130,799

FY27: \$137,483

This provides funding for a paralegal-level Criminal Process Specialist. Because the Criminal Division is understaffed, an attorney-level person handles routine tasks that could be done by a supervised paralegal-level person. With this position, the Criminal Division would be able to better create and analyze caseloads, prepare public information documents and online trainings, assist the clerks and judges with developing alternative schedules to better manage the caseload, work with the grants coordinator to research grant opportunities for training of judges and court

personnel, assist the clerks in developing a plan for better management of the roster for court-appointed attorneys, and provide quarterly training statewide to the bail commissioners and jail staff.

C-A-16: General Fund (A-461 4th initiative)

FY26: \$132,716

FY27: \$133,812

Funding is requested for four existing, intermittent project court-paid Referees to serve as decision makers in non-jury civil and family matters due to backlogs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The associated costs include remote hosting and transcription services, minor equipment, and licenses. Providing contracted hosting services mitigates the larger expenses related to onsite spacing needs, and transcripts may be used to support an objection to the Referee's report.

C-A-19: General Fund (A-461 5th initiative)

FY26: \$191,759

FY27: \$75,814

Security at our facilities remains a top priority. This request seeks funding to replenish supplies and replace aging equipment, including one additional uniform per officer, firearm supplies, trauma kits, and body armor.

C-A-20: General Fund (A-461 6th initiative)

FY26: \$123,624

FY27: \$129,697

A Human Resources Assistant position is requested to support the growth of the MJB employee-base and its evolving workplace complexities. HR has faced the following increases: the employee ticket system by 14.75% (unrelated to COVID) since 2023, ergonomic evaluations by 176% from 2022 to 2023, supervisory support for performance management (discipline) needed by 81% from 2022 to 2023, and complaints and investigations by 157% from 2021. Certain tasks require upper-level HR support, and an assistant position would allow managers to focus their efforts on complicated issues as opposed to routine tasks.

C-A-21: General Fund (A-462 1st initiative)

FY26: \$7,621

FY27: \$7,623

As mentioned in initiative C-A-20, the Human Resources Department has faced a massive increase in demands due to the MJB's exponential growth over the last few years. Issues are more complex and require more oversight by top-level management. The Director is unable to address this increased demand without high-level assistance. The reorganization of the Employee Relations Specialist to a Manager of Human Resources and People Operations is required so they may respond to complicated inquiries from directors and provide guidance to the State Court Administrator on issues related to Human Resources.

C-A-23: Collections Fund (A-462 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$189,993

FY27: \$199,453

This initiative continues two limited-period Collections Clerk positions through June 12, 2027, previously authorized in Public Law 2019, chapter 343. These clerks assist in the collection of

overdue court fines and fees as authorized by Maine Revised Statutes, Title 4, section 20 and are funded from the monies collected. Position #123000604 is currently full time, and this request would combine positions #123000606A and #123000606B into one extended, full-time position.

C-A-24: General Fund (A-462 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$125,000

FY27: \$150,000

This provides funding to allow for a statewide Service Level Agreement so that audio and visual (AV) equipment in all courtrooms will be repaired and serviced promptly. The use of AV equipment has increased and is more complex following the pandemic. The court and its system partners rely on this technology to conduct proceedings, and an inability to service items promptly has led to cancellations or the postponement of proceedings, contributing to delays and case backlogs.

C-A-25: General Fund (A-462 4th initiative)

FY26: \$210,000

FY27: \$50,000

70 courtrooms need to be upgraded with Neat Bar technology to replace the temporary (now obsolete) Zoom Carts that were used as an emergency measure for remote and hybrid hearings. The Neat Bars allow litigants, witnesses, and other individuals to attend proceedings remotely. The Neat Bar Pros offer a significant upgrade from our current audio-visual solution and provide a more reliable, secure, and higher quality video conferencing experience to both internal and external participants. The addition will cut down on delays due to malfunction or the inability to hear or see critical information during the proceeding.

C-A-26: General Fund (A-462 5th initiative)

FY26: \$165,500

FY27: \$165,500

Courts rely on For-The-Record (FTR) to create the official audio record for courtroom proceedings. The technology requires frequent and timely servicing, but the MJB does not have sufficient staffing to maintain this equipment statewide. This funding is for an FTR service contract so that courtroom proceedings are not canceled or delayed because of a malfunction in the recording system.

C-A-27: General Fund (A-462 6th initiative)

FY26: \$129,000

FY27: \$129,000

As mentioned in initiative C-A-26, FTR is essential to courtroom proceedings, but the technology has not been updated in several years and is no longer reliable. This initiative provides funding to upgrade to the newer version.

C-A-28: General Fund (A-462 7th initiative)

FY26: \$525,000

FY27: \$525,000

This initiative provides funding for a modern Digital Sound Processor (DSP) to replace analog sound mixers, which are not compatible with the newer version of FTR.

C-A-29: General Fund (A-463 1st initiative)

FY26: \$100,200

FY27: \$100,200

This funding will allow the Maine Judicial Branch to move FTR recordings to the AWS government cloud, which will provide ransomware protection and greater storage capacity. The current servers are nearly full, and cloud storage will be less expensive than adding servers. In addition, this initiative will allow for all court data to be backed up in the cloud as protection and for all court records in the new electronic case management system to be copied and stored in the cloud on AWS. This will protect the data in case of damage on the courthouse servers or a cyberattack, allowing for fast and accurate restoration.

C-A-31: General Fund (A-463 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$10,000

FY27: \$10,000

This initiative is for software to allow judges to securely access MJB applications on their cellphones. Remote access can be used to review and sign confidential documents, including e-warrants and protection orders, which require timely processing.

C-A-33: General Fund (A-463 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$75,000

FY27: \$75,000

This one-time request, first established by Public Law 2023, chapter 643, seeks to continue a contracted Technical Account Management position through fiscal year 2026-27. This position helps manage Tyler's support of the implementation of the electronic case management and eFiling system. The expertise of this high-level executive has been critical to project success thus far, and the need is anticipated through completion of the project.

C-A-34: General Fund (A-463 4th initiative)

FY26: \$60,000

FY27: \$60,000

Funding is requested for the increased cost for onsite storage technology for the court's electronic information.

C-A-37: General Fund and CMS – Technology Fee (A-463 5th initiative)

FY26: \$1,838,125 and (\$988,852)

FY27: \$1,838,125 and (\$988,525)

This is a repeat request from the last supplemental budget when one-time funding was awarded. Funding for the new electronic filing and case management system needs to be reallocated from the CMS Technology Fee OSR account to the General Fund on an ongoing basis. The filing fees from the CMS Technology Fee account are not generating enough funding to pay for the ongoing licensing and maintenance costs. The fund shows no sign of rebounding. The implementation of this new system cannot continue without General Fund support.

C-A-41: General Fund (A-464 1st initiative)

FY26: \$224,210

FY27: \$235,204

This initiative requests funding for two Courtroom Technician positions. The ability to address technical issues is more acute given the reliance on remote proceedings, and these positions

provide technical assistance in the courtroom and technical support to staff in the operation of both hardware and software that the court relies on to process cases efficiently. There are currently four Courtroom Technicians statewide, and the addition of these two positions will move the MJB closer to having a Courtroom Technician in all eight regions.

C-A-42: General Fund (A-464 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$22,961

FY27: \$24,741

This initiative increases two Business Analyst/Technology Trainer positions from pay grade 14 to 16 to allow for the hiring of persons with added expertise in business analysis and training. This expertise is necessary in order to train MJB staff on the 40+ applications (not including MEJIS and Enterprise Justice) used in the day-to-day business of the court system.

C-A-43: General Fund (A-464 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$374,688

FY27: \$400,552

This request for four additional Assistant Clerks is similar to the request made in the last Biennium. An independent operational review has identified a significant lack of clerk staffing in all courts statewide contributing to the backlog. These positions are needed to adequately staff clerks' offices throughout the state.

C-A-91: General Fund (A-464 4th initiative)

FY26: \$337,446

FY27: \$340,582

This initiative continues two limited-period Court Appointed Special Advocate Legal Services Advisor positions (previously continued by Public Law 2023, chapter 17) through June 12, 2027.

C-A-92: General Fund and Court Improvement (A-464 5th initiative)

FY26: \$53,949 and \$127,050

FY27: \$54,421 and \$128,161

Funding is requested to continue one limited-period Child Protective and Juvenile Process Specialist position (previously continued in Public Law 2023, chapter 17) through June 12, 2027, and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position is funded by the federal Court Improvement Grant through the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children and Families. The grant is targeted to improve Maine's system of justice with regard to safety, well-being, and permanency of Maine's most vulnerable children, those within the child welfare system. The position is responsible for assisting in the implementation of grant requirements.

C-A-38: General Fund (A-464 6th initiative)

FY26: \$100,000

FY27: \$100,000

ADRIS is the provider management system for mediators, used to manage reports and reimbursements to mediators. The system requires a major upgrade to maintain its viability.

C-A-39: General Fund (A-464 7th initiative)

FY26: \$148,686

FY27: \$156,096

This request provides funding for a full-time Security Analyst position to analyze, plan, test, and develop action plans on an ongoing basis to combat cybersecurity threats to the MJB IT system. IT security is paramount to the ability of the courts to function on a day-to-day basis. Cybersecurity is critical to ensure that electronic systems function well and are secure.

C-A-93: General Fund and JUD DHS IV-D Cooperative Agreement (A-465 1st initiative)

FY26: \$254,402 and \$385,133

FY27: \$263,700 and \$399,210

This initiative continues five limited-period Law Clerk positions (previously continued in Public Law 2023, chapter 17) through June 12, 2027, and provides funding for related All Other costs.

C-A-94: Publications Fund (A-465 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$199,658

FY27: \$202,780

This initiative continues two limited-period Service Center/Violations Bureau Assistant Clerk positions (previously continued in Public Law 2023, chapter 17) through June 12, 2027, and provides funding for related All Other costs.

C-A-95: Collections Fund (A-465 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$101,129

FY27: \$105,538

This initiative continues one limited-period Assistant Clerk position (previously continued in Public Law 2023, chapter 17) through June 12, 2027, and provides funding for related All Other costs.

C-A-96: General Fund (A-465 4th initiative)

FY26: \$40,961

FY27: \$40,961

This request covers the cost of the increase in fees for Westlaw.

C-A-97: General Fund (A-465 5th initiative)

FY26: \$183,959

FY27: \$192,556

This initiative continues two limited-period Assistant Clerk positions (previously continued in Public Law 2023, chapter 17) through June 12, 2027.

C-A-7000: General Fund (A-465 6th initiative)

FY26: \$100,000

The MJB is transitioning away from Google's G-suite platform and migrating to Microsoft Office 365 (the platform in which most of the enterprise and government world resides). Although emails were successfully transitioned in 2023, the Judicial Branch needs to hire outside contractors to complete a successful Office 365 transition from Google Sites to SharePoint, Google Files to OneDrive, Google Groups to MS Groups, and Google Calendars to MS Calendars. This is a one-time expenditure to complete the transition so that the Judicial Branch will no longer require Google licenses.

C-A-7001: General Fund (A-466 1st initiative)

FY26: \$12,910

FY27: \$12,914

(Approved Supplemental Budget Request C-A-88)

This initiative provides funding for the reclassification of the Court Access Coordinator position, which provides oversight and management of legal programs consistent with other program managers and works closely with judicial and administrative leadership, judges, clerks, administrators, and stakeholders to ensure legal compliance and to mitigate legal and financial risk to the Judicial Branch. The work performed in this position requires specialized legal expertise and is consistent in scope/responsibility, critical thinking, freedom to act, and accountability of the pay grade 20 confidential management positions.

C-A-7002: General Fund (A-466 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$5,892

FY27: \$6,177

(Approved Supplemental Budget Request C-A-89)

This initiative provides funding for reclassification of one Assistant Clerk position. The Assistant Clerk position assigned to the Business and Consumer Docket requires a high level of expertise in handling complex civil cases and expanded involvement in proceedings and with judges. Therefore, it necessitates a reclassification to represent the advanced skills and multifaceted responsibilities more appropriate to the Associate Clerk job classification.

C-A-7003: General Fund (A-466 3rd initiative)

FY26: \$7,175

FY27: \$7,786

(Approved Supplemental Budget Request C-A-90)

This initiative provides funding for the reclassification of one Help Desk Lead position. IT support needs have expanded considerably, and the Help Desk Support Lead now fully supervises the help desk staff and takes the lead in supporting, training, and supervising the team. Additionally, this position has taken on responsibilities like those of a Field Technician I, which is compensated at pay grade 16. Increased duties include support for numerous systems (courtroom audio/video, FTR systems, VOIP phones, etc.) and help desk administrative/organizational responsibilities (updating procedures/Knowledge Base, analyzing ticket survey reports, ordering equipment, and processing invoices). These additional assignments demand a broad range of specialized skills and responsibilities.

C-A-7004: General Fund and CMS – Technology Fee (A-466 4th initiative)

FY26: \$4,032 and \$16,276

FY27: \$4,034 and \$16,290

(Approved Supplemental Budget Request C-A-91)

This initiative provides funding for the reclassification of one Court Operations Specialist (pay grade 16) to a Court Operations Analyst position (pay grade 17). Job responsibilities have changed from providing technical assistance and training to assisting in the identification and implementation of quality improvement practices and procedures associated with case processing standards; assisting in analyzing management reports and implementing court improvement recommendations; assisting in supporting policies and procedures that enhance consistent, timely, and accurate statewide standards for effective case processing; and making recommendations regarding policies, procedures, staff training, and other resource needs based

on caseload data, including court forms. New tasks are more appropriate to the Court Operations Analyst job classification.

C-A-7005: General Fund (A-466 5th initiative)

FY26: \$12,923

FY27: \$12,927

(Approved Supplemental Budget Request C-A-92)

This initiative provides funding for the reclassification of the Deputy Chief position. This request is driven by the additional duties performed by the Chief Deputy, including oversight of the Major position and subsequently the entire northern region of the state. The work performed in this position requires specialized expertise and is consistent in scope/responsibility, critical thinking, freedom to act, and accountability of the pay grade 20 confidential management positions.

C-A-7006: General Fund (A-466 6th initiative)

FY26: (\$344,800)

FY27: (\$344,800)

The existing federal VOCA award from the Department of Justice will end in September 2025. This initiative will reduce the portion of the allocation supported by these funds and corresponds with HUM C-A-7403.

C-A-7007: General Fund (A-467 1st initiative)

FY26: \$260,000

FY27: \$260,000

This request provides funding for an increase in marshal service contracts. The sheriffs' offices in Lincoln and Somerset Counties provide judicial marshal services to the state courts located in those areas. This initiative raises the contractual rate for deputies paid by those counties to the same rate of pay given to judicial marshals working directly for the MJB.

C-A-71: Judicial – Debt Service (A-467 2nd initiative)

FY26: \$2,836,355

FY27: \$7,841,837

This initiative seeks funding to support additional debt service obligations as a result of new bond appropriations for the construction of three new courthouse facilities in Hancock, Somerset, and Androscoggin Counties.

PART AAA, SEC. AAAA-1

Transfer of Personal Services balances to All Other; Judicial Department, Courts – Supreme; Superior & District; fiscal year 2025-26. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, for fiscal years 2025-26, the Judicial Department is authorized to transfer up to \$80,000 of available balances of appropriations in the Personal Services line category in the Courts – Supreme, Superior, and District program, after all financial commitments for salary, benefit, and other obligations have been met, to the All Other line category in order to fund costs associated with market pay study. These amounts may be transferred by financial order upon the recommendation of the State Budget Officer and approval of the Governor. These transfers are not considered adjustments to appropriations. 126 PART AAAA SUMMARY

This Part authorizes the Judicial Branch to transfer Personal Services to All Other to fund a market pay study.

PART FFFF, SEC. FFFF-1

Judges and Justice Salary Adjustment. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, effective July 1, 2025, and July 1, 2026, the State Court Administrator shall increase the salaries of each judge or justice on the Supreme Judicial, Superior, and District Courts by 3% total in each of those fiscal years. 129 PART FFFF SUMMARY

Before I conclude, I wanted to touch briefly on two initiatives that did not make it into the Governor's recommended budget: an increase to the base salaries for judges and an increase for the rates for active retired judges (ARJs).

I testified during the last biennium that the salary for Maine trial judges ranked 51st lowest in the United States when adjusted for COLA. We thank you for supporting an increase. The latest rankings were released last month by the National Center for State Courts. Maine trial judges ranked 51st lowest in the country when adjusted for cost of living. Aside from the obvious consequence that judges in Maine are paid less than their colleagues across the country and, more importantly, in our neighboring states (New Hampshire at \$185,638 and Vermont at \$182,499), the low pay has a direct effect on the compression of salaries across the branch.

Finally, I repeat a request that we have made consistently over the past several years to amend the per diem rates for active retired judges. Unlike many jurisdictions, Maine relies heavily on the ARJs to move the caseload. Their pay should reflect the important work they do.

Thank you for your time and attention today. I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have now or at the work session.